

Why Hire a Trained Health Educator?

December 2002

Public health in Washington State is being called on to provide a clear and accountable measure of performance. Qualified health educators have the leadership skills and experience to perform the work needed to meet many of the new public health standards, especially those related to assessment and prevention.

What makes a health educator unique

Health educators use their skills to engage the community in preventing health problems. They are trained to adapt a variety of skills that support programs. A health educator, as part of a team of public health professionals, is the person who can bring all the pieces of a prevention project together. A health educator can:

1 Conduct community needs assessments

- Has knowledge of community values and attitudes that affect health behavior

2 Mobilize and involve community groups

- Develop partnerships that bring in funds and resources
- Conduct outreach to diverse audiences
- Facilitate small and large group planning
- Collaborate effectively with audiences to accomplish goals

3 Plan, implement, evaluate prevention programs

- Develop targeted strategies
- Apply social marketing methods including conducting surveys and focus groups

4 Conduct program evaluations

- Apply appropriate evaluation methods
- Use results for program quality improvement

5 Identify and develop resources

- Write grants
- Develop education and outreach materials
- Identify community partners and resources

Public health educators are the ones who make the link between the people, the community, the science of behavioral change, and the message.

— *Elaine Engle*
*Director,
Health Education/
Promotion*
*Spokane Regional
Health District*

6 Use best practices to promote policy change and voluntary behavior change

- Use proven techniques and sound methodology
- Apply behavior change theories

7 Communicate effectively in small groups and public settings

8 Plan conferences and workshops.

Resources

These documents are available through the H.E.R.E. in Washington web site (Health Education Resource Exchange)

www.doh.wa.gov/HERE/howto/toolbox.asp

- Sample health educator job descriptions for local and state health departments, which include responsibilities and competencies
- Tips on recruiting health education student interns

Certification

There is a national credential for health educators at the entry level. Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) requires graduation from approved and accredited university programs, examination based on standard competencies and continuing education for recertification. A job applicant with a CHES credential has mastered the skills described above.

How can I recruit a health educator for a job opening?

Three universities in Washington State offer undergraduate degrees in community health education: Central Washington University (CWU), Eastern Washington University (EWU), and Western Washington University (WWU). Graduates of these programs are good candidates for both entry level and experienced health educator positions in your public health agency.

Students from these programs are encouraged to pursue internships in local and state public health agencies. Spokane and Snohomish are just two local health jurisdictions that have had positive experiences hosting student interns.

For more specific information on student interns or who to contact at the universities, contact: Ruth Abad in the Office of Health Promotion: 360-236-3702 or ruth.abad@doh.wa.gov

The Pacific Northwest Society for Public Health Educators (SOPHE) maintains a Job Bank. If you are recruiting a health educator and would like to post the position in this Job Bank contact: www.pnwhealth.com/pnwsophe.htm



Office of Health Promotion
P.O. Box 47833
Olympia, WA 98504-7833
360-236-3702